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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/28/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [UN](#)  
SUBJECT: SYG SELECTION: SEPTEMBER 28 STRAW POLL RESULTS;  
NEXT POLL - ON OCTOBER 2 - TO USE "COLORED BALLOTS"

REF: A. STATE 160541  
[1](#)B. USUN 1759

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Bolton, Permanent Representative, for  
reasons 1.4 b,d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Ban Ki-Moon increased his lead over his nearest competitors in the third Secretary-General straw poll, though one delegation that had previously encouraged Ban's candidacy slipped to the "no opinion" category. The Security Council - in a contentious meeting the previous day - agreed to conduct the straw poll on the 28th without differentiating between permanent and elected members. As part of that decision, based on strong arguments from Ambassador Bolton and others, the Council agreed to conduct another straw poll on Monday, October 2 with differentiated ballots. Most observers believe the vote on the 28th serves as a placeholder in advance of Monday's vote - when the positions of the P5 will become clear. There has been one immediate casualty of Thursday's vote, however, as Sri Lankan candidate Dhanapala has withdrawn and will not be on Monday's ballot. Of the two new entrants, Afghanistan's Ashraf Ghani performed poorly, while Latvian President Vike-Freiberga collected seven encouraging votes, putting her in third place behind Ban and India's Shashi Tharoor (who saw his support slip slightly). End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The Security Council conducted its third straw poll on candidates for Secretary-General on September 28. As per the two previous ballots, Council members were asked to choose whether to "encourage", "discourage", or offer "no opinion" on the seven candidates officially nominated by a Member State. The results:

-- FM Ban: 13 encourage; 1 discourage; 1 no opinion.  
-- U/SYG Tharoor: 8 encourage; 3 discourage; 4 no opinion.  
-- President Vike-Freiberga: 7 encourage; 6 discourage; 2 no opinion.  
-- DPM Surakiart: 5 encourage; 7 discourage; 3 no opinion.  
-- Prince Zeid: 3 encourage; 6 discourage; 6 no opinion.  
-- Ashraf Ghani: 3 encourage; 6 discourage; 6 no opinion.  
-- Dhanapala: 3 encourage; 7 discourage; 5 no opinion.

P-5 Differences on the Way Forward  
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[1](#)3. (C/NF) Prior to the vote, in a contentious meeting of the Council in "informal informals" on September 27, Ambassador Bolton argued it was time to differentiate between the votes

of permanent and non-permanent members. Use of "colored ballots" would help keep the Council on track towards meeting its target of making a formal recommendation to the General Assembly no later than the first half of October and would provide much needed transparency to the candidates remaining in the race about their realistic prospects for success. The majority of the Council, including China and Russia, supported his argument. To much laughter, Russian PR Churkin said that repeated ballots without differentiation reminded him of a sign: "Trespassers will be shot. Survivors will be shot again."

14. (C/NF) French PR de La Sabliere was not laughing, however, and noted that he would be unable to agree on differentiated ballots. UK DPR Pearce, who noted that her instructions came directly from FS Beckett, joined him in this objection. De La Sabliere claimed that the Council had only ever agreed to give "two months" transition time to the new Secretary-General and that the Council should give the new

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candidates in the race "the same chance" by conducting the next straw poll on the same basis as the previous ballots. Churkin took issue with de La Sabliere's reference to "two months" of transition time, noting that the Council had never before discussed such a timeframe, and had always talked about reaching agreement in "late September or early October." Ambassador Bolton noted that de La Sabliere himself had argued earlier in the month (at the September 6 informal meeting) of the importance of conducting a differentiated ballot "before the end of the month" in order to give the process a "push" (ref b, para 5). De La Sabliere fumed that he had said something else (but never elaborated). After the meeting, the Russian expert told USUN that, in his many meetings with de La Sabliere, he had never seen him so obviously agitated.

15. (C/NF) Ambassador Bolton suggested a compromise position that would have the Council conduct two straw polls - the first without differentiation, the second with colored ballots - in rapid succession. Council members agreed, though the UK's Pearce had to leave the room to call London before she could sign on. Following the ballot on the 28th, the Council will conduct a straw poll with differentiated ballots on Monday, October 2.

Results seen to solidify Ban's lead  
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16. (C) The results of the poll on the 28th are widely seen to solidify Ban's lead, despite receiving one less "encouraging" vote. The ballot that included the "discourage" vote for Ban also discouraged Zeid, encouraged Tharoor and Vike-Freiberga, and offered no opinion on the other three. The ballot that offered "no opinion" on Ban also encouraged Tharoor and Vike-Freiberga, discouraged Dhanapala, Ghani and Surakiart, and offered no opinion on Zeid.

17. (C) Ban's closest competitors all lost ground. Tharoor received two less encouraging votes; Surakiart lost four. Of the new entrants, only Latvian President Vike-Freiberga did well, vaulting past Surakiart into third place with seven encouraging votes. Her vote tally seemed to reflect the continuing split in the Council over the "principle" of regional rotation, with a small number of "no opinion" votes cast despite her recent entry into the race.

18. (U) Following the vote, the first candidate dropped out of the race on the 29th. Sri Lanka notified the Council that it was withdrawing Dhanapala's candidacy in order "to facilitate the election of the emerging most favoured candidate."

Comment  
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19. (C/NF) The poll on the 28th brought few surprises, with

most observers waiting for the differentiated vote on Monday to signal the Council's likely course. Within the Council, there is plenty of speculation as to reasoning behind the French shift on colored ballots, widely seen as signaling their discomfort with the prospect of closing the deal with Ban quickly. One contact at the French mission told USUN that Paris was "very uneasy" about the way the process has played out, believing that the race "never really began" and is now basically over. In the French view, barring a surprise on Monday, it is unlikely that new "more serious" candidates will enter the race. End Comment.

BOLTON